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REVIEWS OF NEW BOOKS

In projecting the Artistic Crafts Series of Technical Handbooks, under the editorship of W. R. Lethaby, D. Appleton & Co. have undertaken a most important work. There has of late developed in this country great interests in the arts and crafts, and yet there has been a singular lack of authoritative literature specifically relating to the different lines of work covered by this phrase. Those who have essayed to do artistic handiwork have felt the need of technical manuals at once succinct, comprehensive, and up to date.

This is exactly what Mr. Lethaby aims to furnish. As he explains in his general preface, he intends to provide trustworthy text-books of workshop practice from the points of view of experts who have critically examined the methods current in the shops, and putting aside vain survivals, are prepared to say what is good workmanship, and to set up a standard of quality in the artistic crafts.

In the second place, he hopes to treat design itself as an essential part of good workmanship. For a century or more design has been considered a mere matter of appearance, and such ornamentation as there has been has usually been obtained by mechanically following a drawing provided by an artist who knew little of the technical requirements involved in the work. It is now recognized, thanks largely to Ruskin and Morris, that true design is an inseparable element of good quality, involving the selection of suitable material, contrivances for special purposes, expert workmanship, proper finish, and so on, far more than mere ornament. In the third place, the editor intends to have the projected series put artistic craftsmanship before people, as furnishing reasonable occupation for a livelihood.

In the initial volume of the series, "Bookbinding and the Care of Books," by Douglas Cockerell, the plan just outlined has been scrupulously followed. In the three hundred and odd pages of the book there is scarcely a fact respecting the manufacture, decoration, and care of books which is not to be found duly chronicled and specifically explained. The volume is naturally not one for popular reading—it was not intended for such. On the other hand, the book is simply written in clear English, and the work is enforced with a profusion of illustrations designed to elucidate the text.

Mr. Cockerell recognizes the fact that no one can become a skilled workman by reading text-books, and he has therefore sought to supplement, and not to supplant, workshop training for bookbinders. The work is doubtless the most thorough and comprehensive book on this subject yet offered to the public, and as such will find a hearty welcome among amateur and professional bookbinders, and among librarians and book-lovers in general.

For further book reviews, see advertising page 11.